

Foreign Trade—Opening the Outports—Address of last Session.

The order of the day having been moved, and the papers connected with it read,

Mr. STEWART rose and spoke as follows:—I approach this subject, Sir, with a feeling of despondency. Our most earnest prayers are disregarded. Our anxious wishes unheeded. The justice of our claims neither acknowledged nor investigated. Our industry continues to be burthened annually to the extent of £10,000 for the support of an establishment which collects a revenue of about £11,000. The liberality with which we have dealt with H. M. Government is returned by bad faith. When we ask that we may, as the people of Halifax can, export and import freely and legally into the outports of the Province, we are answered by a demand for more money to support the officers of the Customs, while the sum granted by this House in 1829 is more than ample. When I look upon the results of this system, I find the morals of our people becoming daily more corrupt by the extension of unlawful trade. Our Creeks and Bays are filled with vessels manned by men who are compelled to violate the law, or to want bread for themselves and their families. The sympathies of the inhabitants are becoming more and more excited in favor of the contraband trader. Coercive laws, pains, fines, penalties, run, are held over their heads, yet the traffic increases. Our revenue diminished by payments into the free ports of St. Andrews, St. John, and Campo Bello, but more fearfully by the daring of those who, rather than run themselves in detail, by entering into a free port, encounter the danger of ruin by disregarding the laws, however penal, altogether. What an absurd state of things it is, that the people of Lunenburg shall be obliged to bring their rum and sugar and molasses to this port of Halifax, before they can ship it to even the adjoining Colonies. The United States offer advantageous markets for their fish and their agricultural productions; from this place they can be freely brought hither in return. Not so to Lunenburg, to Hants, to Cumberland, to Arichat. From these they may take their fish, their potatoes, plaster, butter, grindstones, and other produce of their industry, but they may not bring any thing in return, unless they stop at St. John, and there pay the charges, of which the people of Cumberland have complained by petition the present Session. Building Stones of the finest quality, and such also as are used in the manufactures of the United States, have been shipped from Wallace, where this article abounds, direct to the port of New York; but the people of that part of the Province are not permitted, as the men of Pictou, of Halifax, of Liverpool, and Yarmouth are, to bring back a single article. Hence the direct trade is dwindled to a shipment to this port in small quantities, to be hence transhipped to Boston, thus adding the various charges which attend this cumbersome and ridiculous mode of doing business, to the first cost of the article, and rendering it less able to contend with other countries. I am informed that the merchants of Lunenburg applied on behalf of that port, through Lord Sandon, one of the members of Parliament for Liverpool, to the Ministry, and the reply he received was, that it could not be opened, because of the increased expense which would be required. Now, this House, at its last session, asked for freedom of trade generally, and we are told that the abolition of the duty on flour will give all the relief required. How this is to open the ports does not exactly appear. Things remain just as they were except that this measure will diminish our small revenue three or four thousand pounds, at a time when the Province can ill afford it, and we must impose additional taxes on the people to make up the deficiency. But as we are told that the increased expense is an insuperable obstacle to the granting the prayer of the House, I will, although I am but repeating a thrice told tale, briefly advert to the arrangement made by this House with H. M. Government, and by which it will clearly appear that this Province contributes, by its annual grant, much more than its fair proportion of it, and more than sufficient to defray the whole expenditure without the £2000 which is annually collected from the people of the Province, and also applied unconstitutionally as I have ever contended, and do now contend, to the support of the officers of the Customs. I freely admit that the people of Great Britain ought not to be taxed to support officers necessary for our trade. Let us examine then if this is the fact.

For a long time the House of Assembly complained to the Mother Country, that the fees exacted from the owners of vessels were extravagant, and sought relief; they did not desire that the officers should be remunerated by fixed salaries. They remonstrated, not that fees were an improper mode of supporting this establishment, but that the amount of fees taken from the coasting vessels, especially, was such as to the trade ought not to be exacted. They were proposed relief. Then

came the celebrated act, by which foreign trade was opened to the Colonies. For the protection of her own manufactures, Great Britain imposed, by that act, duties on those of foreign production, and the proceeds were by it directed to be paid into the Colonial Treasury—to the infinite surprise of the Colonists, throughout the whole of them, they found that the officers of the Customs were directed to pay themselves first out of these duties; and in this Province a very large sum, as nearly as I recollect, about £8000 Sterling, was yearly retained. This was the relief given—we asked that the fees on the coasting trade should be made less burthensome to it. Of the whole sum loved for their support by the officers of the Customs in fees, the vessels of the mother country had paid no considerable portion, in all it amounted to but about £6000 currency—the relief given, was to charge the people of this Province £8000 sterling—and this sum increasing, or at least having a tendency to increase, from year to year. All the Colonies remonstrated and resisted the claim of right, set up by the officers of the Customs, to retain any portion of the proceeds of the duties collected by them. It was insisted that, although Parliament could lawfully impose duties on foreign productions—it could do so, for the purposes of regulation only, not for those of revenue; and that by the imprescriptible rights of Englishmen, the Colonists alone could dispose of the amount of all duties levied upon them. The trade of Jamaica was materially interrupted by this dispute; in some of the Islands the officers were prosecuted. At length, in this Province, in the year 1829, by which time £25,000 sterling had been retained by them, Ministers exhibited to the House a scale of Salaries characterized as moderate, which amounted to about £8,400 sterling, of which they required this Province to pay £6,100 sterling, alleging that, as a main object of Parliament in passing the Act opening the trade to foreign countries, was Colonial relief—the mother country did not desire to profit by the change—she would pay the remainder.

The House, in agreeing to grant this sum, forwarded a scale of salaries by which it appeared that £6,000 was enough; but as it was probable that the foreign trade would increase the duties and number of officers, the House granted what was required; and to put an end to the dispute, gave the sum retained, as a free gift, to His Majesty.

[Much more was said on the subject by the hon. Member from Cumberland, after which he moved the following Resolutions:—]

Resolved, That this House adhere to the Resolutions passed by this House on the 7th April, 1832, and do earnestly desire that the prayer of this House, contained in the Addresses on the subject of the expense of the Customs establishment in this Colony, the Crown Duties collected therein, and the extension of the Foreign trade of this Province, passed on the 29th March, 1834, and the 5th January, 1835, may be speedily granted.

Resolved, That the abolition of the duty on flour, contemplated by His Majesty's Government, as communicated by his Excellency the Lieutenant Governor, as a reply to the address of this House, of the 5th January, 1835, although a measure acceptable to this House, will not give His Majesty's loyal subjects the relief prayed for; but on the contrary thereof, that his Majesty's Government have misapprehended the prayers and wishes of this House. And whereas the great expense of supporting the Customs Establishment, the unconstitutional application of the old Crown Duties thereto, and the greater freedom of trade, so anxiously sought for by this House, are subjects of the deepest moment to the people of the Province, and demand from their representatives that they should omit no constitutional measure to obtain for them speedy relief in the premises:

Resolved, Therefore, that a Committee be appointed to prepare a further address to his Majesty, also an address to the Right Honourable House of Lords; also, an address to the Right Honourable the House of Commons; again anxiously entreating that they may be afforded adequate relief; and that the address to the House of Lords and House of Commons, be transmitted by Mr. Speaker to the Right Honourable Lord Melbourne and Lord John Russell, with the respectful request of this House, that they will present them severally to the said Houses of Lords and Commons.

Resolved, That the same Committee prepare an Address to His Excellency the Lieutenant Governor, praying that he will forward the Address to His Majesty, with his Excellency's favourable recommendation of the prayer thereof.

Mr. UNIACKER opposed the motion, and repudiated the policy of the learned Gentleman from Cumberland, as subversive of the rights secured by law to the people of Nova Scotia, and as opening a wider door than ever to illicit trade, and laying the foundation for a further call on the people of the Province, in aid of the Customs; he was in no way disposed to support the

Resolutions that were moved by the Master of the Rolls in 1834.

Several other Members took an active share in the debate, which was protracted to great length, and the House adjourned without coming to a decision.

The following Petitions, among many others, have been presented to the House:

A petition of the Rev W. B. McLeod and others, by Mr. Young, praying aid to open a new line of road, from McCurra's brook, to McAdam's bridge, in the Upper District of the County of Sydney, and for aid to repair a part of Arisaig Pier, injured by a storm in December last—referred to Messrs G. Smith, Young, and Chipman.

A petition of Joseph Sanford and others, by Mr. Morton, praying that measures may be adopted to prevent the taking of fees by the Chief Justice and Judges of the Supreme Court in suits at Law.

A petition of Sam'l Archibald, a road Commissioner, by G. Smith, praying reimbursement of monies by him over expended on the new line of road between Truro and Halifax, through Brookfield.

A petition of Thomas Whittmore of Antigonish, by Mr. Dickson, praying a return of duties paid by him upon a piano and certain carding machinery, and vint therefor, brought by him into this Province from the United States of America. Referred to a select Committee.

A petition of Iraa Hart and others, members of the Temperance Society of the North East Branch of Marguerite or Margaree, in the county of Cape Breton, by Mr. Uniacke, praying that the liquor licence Act, of the last session may be altered, and the right to grant licences exclusively confined to the Grand Juries and Justices in sessions.

A petition of the West River Temperance Society, District of Pictou, by Mr. Blanchard, praying that a Law may be passed imposing a local tax upon all spirituous liquors imported into, or manufactured in, said District, for the support of the poor thereof.

A petition of John W. Harris and others, office bearers of the Pictou Subscription Library, by Mr. Blanchard, praying assistance by a grant to that Institution from the Provincial Funds.

A petition of James Fraser and James McGregor, Acting Overseers of the poor for Township of Egerton, in the District of Pictou, by Mr. Blanchard, praying reimbursement of the expenses incurred by them on account of two transient Irish paupers, who had been much frozen in the woods, and supported by that Township. Referred to Messrs O'Brien, Archibald, Roach.

Petition of Jonathan Greaves, late Deputy Post Master, at Truro, by Mr. Archibald, setting forth the additional trouble that had been imposed upon him by the Establishment of the Eastern Stage Coaches during his holding office, and praying compensation.

A petition of the Temperance Society of the Lower Settlement, East River, Pictou, by Mr G. Smith, praying that Magistrates may be prohibited from dealing in Spirituous, liquors and that an additional duty may be imposed thereon, to be applied to the relief of the poor.

A petition of inhabitants of the Lower End of the West River, Pictou, by John McLean, Chairman of a public meeting, by G. Smith, setting forth their being members of the congregation under the superintendence of the Rev. James Ross, and their meeting house being much decayed, they have commenced a new one, and pray an act to enable them to sell and dispose of the old one,—paying absent proprietors and those refusing to join them in erecting the new meeting house their proportionate share of the proceeds of the old building. Referred to G. Smith, with leave to bring in a bill.

A petition of Joseph Smith and others, inhabitants of New Glasgow, and of the East River of Pictou, also, a petition of Abram Patterson and others, merchants, and other inhabitants of Pictou; and a petition of the General Mining Association, by G. Smith, setting forth the great advantage that would result from deepening the navigation of the East River of Pictou, and the desire of the Association to accomplish the same as far up as the loading wharf, near the New Glasgow Bridge, so as to admit large vessels proceeding thither, to the great benefit of the County at large, as well as the Association, and praying that pecuniary aid may be granted to the Association towards such undertaking, and that they may be empowered when it may be completed, to demand a small toll upon vessels exceeding forty tons burthen, taking the benefit of passing up the channel, in consequence of its being so deepened. Referred to Messrs G. Smith, Archibald, Uniacke, Stewart, and Dodd.

Bills Passed by the Assembly

An Act to reduce the expenses of Suits at Law, on Judgments by confession. An Act to vacate the seats of members of the Assembly in certain cases. An Act concerning private Acts. An Act relating to every-